

NOAA Education Mini-Grant Opportunity FY06 Request for Applications

Introduction

The NOAA Education Mini-Grant (EdMG) program provides funding to support development projects aimed at building NOAA capacity and catalyzing coordination and expansion of existing activities to support the Agency-wide cross-cutting priority of environmental literacy and foster development of mission-goal education components.

Eligibility

The NOAA EdMG grant program is an internally led NOAA funding mechanism with funds distributed only to NOAA entities. A NOAA entity can be a line office, a staff office, a program or a program component. NGOs, other federal, state and tribal agencies can participate as partners, receiving funds through the NOAA partner for contributions to an EdMG-funded project. Either the PI or the Co-PI of the project must be a NOAA federal employee. If you have any questions concerning your eligibility please contact Jon Lilley in the Office of Education either by phone (202 482 2269) or via email (Jon.Lilley@noaa.gov).

For FY06, up to \$500,000 will be available for the EdMG program. The maximum level of funding that will be awarded to any one project is \$100,000. The minimum level of funding that will be awarded to any one project is \$10,000. Funds must be obligated by the end of FY06. Any unobligated funds will be forfeited and will not be available for the project in FY07.

NOAA Education projects are sponsored by the NOAA Office of Education (OEd). Proposals that promote the participation of underrepresented groups in NOAA-related sciences are strongly encouraged.

Minimum Requirements

The following are the minimum criteria required to ensure consideration for EdMG funding:

- Project must be led by a NOAA entity. A NOAA entity can be a line office, a staff office, a program or a program component;
- PI or Co-PI must be a NOAA federal employee;
- Project addresses the outcomes, objectives, or strategies of one or more NOAA mission goals;¹
- Project employs strategies described in the NOAA Education Plan² and is consistent with NOAA education policy;
- Project is based on NOAA sciences and/or services;

¹ <http://www.spo.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

² http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf

- Project includes goals, objectives, and performance measures (i.e., outputs or learning outcomes) and includes a robust, objective mechanism for evaluating project effectiveness; and
- If appropriate the project must be aligned with appropriate national or state education standards.

If you have any questions regarding the minimum requirements, please contact Jon Lilley in the Education Office prior to submitting a proposal.

Evaluation Ranking Criteria

- Statement of need: proposed activities are based on a clearly articulated needs assessment (25 points).
- Project description: project builds new environmental literacy capacity or broadens the geographic or thematic scope of education programming. Project promotes a one NOAA approach that works across different NOAA entities (25 points).
- Project accountability: project effectiveness will be objectively evaluated and reported (25 points).
- Budget justification: EdMG funding complements existing NOAA-supported education activities or leverages funding from outside (15 points).
- Plan for sustainability: project outlines potential mechanisms for long-term sustainability or successful replication/expansion outside EdMG funding (10 points).

Proposal Format

Each proposal will include:

1. Cover sheet, listing participating NOAA programs and other partners, identifying project principal investigator, and specifying the proposed project start and end dates (1 page).
2. Narrative description of proposed activities, including the environmental literacy needs that are addressed through the project, the design of the project, how the project will be implemented, and the evaluation mechanism(s) for the project (5 pages max). Narrative descriptions should include a statement of need based on a clearly articulated needs assessment; a description of the project showing how the proposal builds new education capacity or broadens the geographic or thematic scope of education programming across NOAA mission goals; and a description of how the project effectiveness will be objectively evaluated and reported.
3. Timeline for implementation. Funds must be obligated by August 18, 2006 (1 page).
4. Budget breakdown. Include any funding contribution by partners (2 pages max).
5. Support letters signed by the NOAA supervisor of the PI and authorized representatives of all supporting partners.

Procedure

1. By COB March 15, 2006, one electronic copy (Microsoft Word or a PDF file) of proposal sent to the appropriate Education Council member and one copy sent to Jon Lilley in the Office of Education. Please refer to Appendix 3 for a list of the Education Council members and their NOAA affiliations.
2. Review Panel includes: at least four members of the NOAA Education Office; and up to two NOAA Education Council members who do not have a conflict of interest with any of the proposals submitted.
3. Proposals are scored and ranked according to evaluation criteria and evaluation rubrics, outlined in Appendix 1.
4. Reviewers will recommend proposals for funding based on rank order to the Director of NOAA Education.
5. The Director of NOAA Education reserves the right to approve proposals for funding outside of rank order to based on
 - availability of funds
 - geographic distribution
 - mission goal applicability
 - type of project (e.g., formal, informal, project evaluation)
 - target audience
6. EdMG funds will be transferred internally (BOP) to the PI's NOAA entity upon approval of the project by the Director of NOAA Education.

Reporting

NOAA EdMG recipients will be required to submit performance reports on a semi-annual basis to Jon Lilley at the Office of Education. Failure to submit progress reports will result in ineligibility of project for future EdMG funding. After the funds are awarded and before the funds are obligated, financial reports must be submitted to Jon Lilley in the Office of Education every month (May 19, 2006, June 16, 2006 and July 14, 2006). After the funds have been obligated, the first performance report will be due 15 days after the end of FY06 Quarter 4 (October 16, 2006). The second (and final performance report) will be due 15 days after the end of FY07 Quarter 2 (April 16, 2007). Each performance report will consist of 1 Microsoft PowerPoint slide (with associated talking points) and a short financial report. Templates for performance and financial reports may be obtained from the Office of Education.

Deadlines

- COB March 15, 2006: Deadline for Submission of NOAA EdMG Proposals to the appropriate Education Council member and Jon Lilley in the Office of Education
- COB March 22, 2006: Education Council members forward proposals to OEd
- April 5, 2006: Award Announcement
- May 19, 2006: Financial report due
- June 16, 2006: Financial report due

- July 14, 2006: Financial report due
- August 18, 2006: Date by which funds must be obligated
- October 16, 2006: Deadline for first performance report
- April 16, 2007: Deadline for second (and final) performance report

Appendix 1 Evaluation Rubrics

Minimum requirements (characteristics required to ensure consideration for funding):

- Project must be led by a NOAA entity. A NOAA entity can be a line office, a staff office, a program or a program component;
- PI or Co-PI must be a NOAA federal employee;
- Project addresses the outcomes, objectives, or strategies of one or more NOAA mission goals;³
- Project employs strategies described in the NOAA Education Plan⁴ and is consistent with NOAA education policy;
- Project is based on NOAA sciences and/or services;
- Project includes goals, objectives, and performance measures (i.e., outputs or learning outcomes) and includes a robust, objective mechanism for evaluating project effectiveness; and

If appropriate the project must be aligned with appropriate national or state education standards.

Ranking Factors:

1. Need: proposed activities are based on a clearly articulated needs assessment (25 points).

1-10 points Based on published reports or assessments of national education requirements for environmental literacy.	11-20 points Elements at left PLUS: Based regional requirements or general characteristics of target audience.	21-25 points Elements at left PLUS: Based on specific needs assessment of target audience.
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2. Project description: project builds new environmental literacy capacity or broadens the geographic or thematic scope of education programming. Project promotes a one NOAA approach that works across different NOAA entities (25 points).

1-10 points Builds new environmental literacy capacity in one mission goal area or expands existing capacity geographically.	11-20 points Elements at left PLUS: Expands existing program activities in 1 goal to be applicable to another mission goal (e.g., Development of a National Marine Sanctuary Severe Weather Education Project).	21-25 points Elements at left PLUS: Builds on existing capacity in one or more mission goals to develop new capacity in another, relies on active partners in multiple mission goal areas and emphasizes systems connections among NOAA sciences.
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³ <http://www.spo.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

⁴ http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf

3. Accountability: project effectiveness will be objectively evaluated and reported (25 points).

1-5 points Project inputs (e.g., money and time) are tracked Project outputs (e.g., participation by audience) are tracked Participant reactions and/or expectations are tracked Project identifies learning objectives	6-15 points Elements at left PLUS: Project identifies how it could collect evaluation data to demonstrate project effectiveness and defines metrics and targets.	16-25 points Elements at left PLUS: Project defines mechanism(s) to collect and analyze data to demonstrate project effectiveness.
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4. Budget: EdMG funding complements existing NOAA-supported education activities or leverages funding from outside partners (15 points).

1-10 points Budget and budget justification are reasonable for proposed activities. PI defined mechanisms for obligating funds by end of FY06.	11-15 points Elements at left PLUS: Budget demonstrates how EdMG funds are used as a catalyst to leverage resources from other partners.
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5. Sustainability: project outlines potential mechanisms for long-term sustainability or successful replication/expansion outside EdMG funding (10 points).

1-5 points Project is linked to emergent issue of importance Project is linked to FY08 or FY09 Program Planning Budget Execution System process	6-10 points Elements at left PLUS: Project outlines viable replication/expansion plan (contingent on demonstration of project effectiveness) through partners, other grants, reallocation of NOAA based program funding.
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Appendix 2
Proposal Coversheet Template

Project Title:

<p>NOAA Program: Project Principal Investigator: Proposed Start Date: Proposed End Date: Amount Requested: Program Match:</p>	
<p>NOAA Entity: Co-PI: Program Match (If any):</p>	<p>NOAA Entity: Co-PI: Program Match (If any):</p>
<p>External Partner: Partner Contribution (If any):</p>	<p>External Partner: Partner Contribution (If any):</p>

Appendix 3 Education Council Members and NOAA Affiliations

Member	NOAA Affiliation	Email
Nina Jackson	NESDIS (At Large)	nina.jackson@noaa.gov
Jennifer Hammond	NMAO	jennifer.hammond@noaa.gov
Molly Harrison	NMFS (At Large)	molly.harrison@noaa.gov
Percy Thomas	NWS (At Large)	percy.thomas@noaa.gov
Thomas Cox	NOS (At Large)	thomas.cox@noaa.gov
Atziri Ibanez	NOS/NERRS	atziri.ibanez@noaa.gov
Michiko Martin	NOS/ONMS	michiko.martin@noaa.gov
Jorgeann Hiebert	OAR (At Large)	jorgeann.hiebert@noaa.gov
Paula Keener-Chavis	OAR/OE	paula.keener-chavis@noaa.gov
James Murray	OAR/Sea Grant	jim.d.murray@noaa.gov
Robert C. Hansen	PA	robert.c.hansen@noaa.gov
Janice Beattie	NOAA Library (ex officio)	janice.beattie@noaa.gov
Kim Benson*	NOAA OEd	kim.benson@noaa.gov

* Goal team proposals should be submitted to the Executive Director of the Education Council (Kim Benson).